BEFORE THE
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, DC 20554

In the Matter of	)	
	)	
Delete, Delete, Delete	)	GN Docket No. 25-133
	)	

COMMENTS OF RED SPECTRUM COMMUNICATIONS, LLC

Pursuant to the Public Notice ("Notice") released by the Commission on March 12, 2025,[1] Red Spectrum Communications, LLC ("Red Spectrum") submits the following comments.

I. Introduction

Red Spectrum is owned and chartered by the government of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe in 2016, and is authorized to provide telecommunications and broadband services within the exterior boundaries of the Reservation.[2] Red Spectrum was a winning bidder in the Connect America Fund Phase II Auction (Auction 903), concluded on August 21, 2018.[3] The FCC granted Red Spectrum Eligible Telecommunications Carrier (ETC) status as of November 22, 2019.[4] In order to be

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[1] In re Delete, Delete, Delete, DA 25-219, released Mar. 12, 2025 ("Delete Docket Public Notice" or "Public Notice"). The Public Notice called for comments to be filed by April 11, 2025. These comments are timely filed.

[2] *See* https://www.red-spectrum.com/.

[3] *See* FCC News Release, August 28, 2018 and https://www.fcc.gov/reports-research/maps/caf2-auction903-results/. Red Spectrum is to receive $521,715 to support build-out to 185 locations (or less than $55,000 annually). Red Spectrum will receive CAF Phase II support in the following census block group: the Census Block Group ID: 160099400001.

[4] *In the Matter of Telecommunications Carriers Eligible for Universal Service Support (Red Spectrum),* DA 19-1204, released November 22, 2019, https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DA-19-1204A1.pdf.

designated as an ETC, Red Spectrum is required to provide facilities-based phone services.[5] Red Spectrum provides both voice (required) and broadband services to approximately 8,137 subscribers on the Coeur d'Alene reservation in Idaho.

But carriers like Red Spectrum are stalled – regulatory requirements make further buildout nearly impossible, and the OPEX and reporting costs are consuming far too many resources – resources that could be used to extend our facilities to new customers. Red Spectrum urges the FCC to consider regulatory relief and reduced reporting requirements on small rural carriers to allow them to better serve their customers and continue to build out to rural areas where the big carriers simply won't go.

II. The Regulatory Burden on Small ETCs is Immense

Red Spectrum's experience as a small Tribal carrier serving a rural Native American reservation reveals a stunning truth about the costs of bridging the digital divide and FCC regulations: They do not reverse scale. The smaller the footprint of the carrier, the higher the cost of buildout and regulatory compliance as a percentage of revenue. The cost of providing voice and data services in terms of equipment and maintenance alone is $48,081 a year. Other phone expenses add up to $47,096. Our staff totals $75,726. Regulatory compliance requires us to engage outside consultants, adding additional costs per year. My staff is too small and too inexperienced in FCC regulatory compliance to do all the necessary paperwork in-house.

[5] *Id.,* ¶ 4 ("The FCC has authority [to grant ETC status] only when 'a common carrier [is] providing telephone exchange service and exchange access that is not subject to the jurisdiction of a State commission.'" *Quoting* 47 U.S.C. § 214(e)(6)).

A. We're Being Buried by Paperwork

The regulatory burden on small carriers is immense. Below we list the High Cost/CAF II reporting requirements that consume far too much of our time and resources:

- Annual HUBB location data…latitude/longitude in awarded census blocks
- USAC selects random samples from HUBB data
- FCC Performance Measures tests

In addition, there are a number of other reports that we have to file which consume significant resources that could be better put to delivering broadband to more customers at lower costs. These reports include:

- 499-Q Quarterly USAC filings
- 499 Annually
- 481 Annually
- Reassigned Numbers Database
- Stir/Shaken
- CPNI Annual Certification
- Company Detail Report
- Annual Record Keeping Compliance
- 477/Broadband Data Collection

These myriad of reporting requirements, developed over years, provide a constant burden on our operations. Large carriers have entire departments to handle these burdens, while small carriers like Red Spectrum must hire consultants to assist with regulatory compliance. In both situations, moreover, these costs are passed onto our customers, many of whom struggle to pay for their telecommunications and broadband services.

Proposal # 1: Find ways to lessen the paperwork burdens on small carriers by either exempting them from filing or consolidating and streamlining forms.

B. Requiring Provision of Facilities-based Voice Service Makes No Sense

As mentioned above, as a requirement to receive ETC status and High Cost/CAF II funding, Red Spectrum is required to provide facilities-based voice service to our customers. It costs us far more to provide that service than we can ever hope to recoup in subscriber revenues. Given the advancement in VoIP and other non-facilities-based telephony, it would make far more sense, from both an engineering and economic perspective, to offer other types of voice services to complement the broadband service for which our network was designed.

Proposal # 2: Eliminate the requirement of ETCs to offer facilities-based telephone service as a prerequisite to receiving High Cost or CAF II funding.

C. FCC-Mandated Performance Testing is Burdensome

These reporting requirements soak up substantial time, energy, and money. The FCC quarterly Performance tests,[6] for example, require us to devote hardware router resources to the test network speeds which constrict bandwidth to customers. We cannot measure customer's bandwidth without negatively affecting their bandwidth. Customers find it intrusive and think we are spying on them while we conduct these tests. Our test results are consistent and redundant – very little changes between tests unless there are significant changes in network hardware.

[6] *See* https://www.fcc.gov/document/wcb-wtb-and-oet-adopt-performance-measures-caf-recipients.

Proposal # 3: Exempt small carriers from conducting quarterly recurring performance tests when there has been no change in major hardware in the network.

D. Building Out to Nonexistent Buildings Makes No Sense

Our CAF II support requires us to build out to a set number of locations that do not seem to exist. The FCC's map does not have a layer we can pull down to see the locations in those census blocks where we are required to build out. As a Tribally-owned carrier and an arm of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, we know our reservation and know where we have locations that remain unserved. We are constantly finding instances where the FCC map shows an eligible location that doesn't exist.

Proposal # 4: Better engage with Tribes to determine unserved areas. The current process is not suited to Tribal Nations.

E. Building Out to Nonexistent Buildings Makes No Sense

The flip side to the "availability" dilemma is that the FCC's broadband maps often show areas as being served when no actual service is available. Our Re-Connect5 grant was rejected due to locations being marked as "already served" when we know that no carrier does, or is willing to, provide actual service to those areas. We know who is served on our reservation, and who isn't.

Proposal # 5: Give Tribes better ability to determine when carriers are not actually offering service. The existing challenge process is too costly and burdensome for Tribes.

III. Conclusion

Red Spectrum is committed to providing 21st Century telecommunications and broadband services to the Coeur d'Alene people. To do so under the current FCC requirements, however, is extremely difficult and costly. The FCC should look for ways to lighten the regulatory burden on small and Tribal carriers such as Red Spectrum. We respectfully request that the FCC consider each of the five proposals outlined in these comments.

Respectfully submitted,

_____/s/_____
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